



*Sammy Slug standing next to our Campus Ballot Drop Box at Quarry Plaza*

## **University of California, Santa Cruz 2024 Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan**

Prepared by Elizabeth Beaumont, Associate Professor of Politics, UCSC  
[beaumont@ucsc.edu](mailto:beaumont@ucsc.edu)

(Liaison for ALLIN Campus Democracy Challenge and NSLVE)

## **Executive Summary:**

This nonpartisan Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP) was developed by the University of California, Santa Cruz in California as part of our preparations for the 2024 elections. The purpose of this plan is to share our campus work to support and increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout.

## **Goals**

The three main sets of democratic engagement goals for UC Santa Cruz for the 2024 election are:

- **Voting: Registration, Opportunity, Encouragement:** to help all eligible students to register, and to provide access and encouragement for students to exercise their voting rights.
  
- **Democratic Voice and Agency, Informed Engagement, and Leadership Opportunities:**
  - To provide all students opportunities
    - to become informed and engaged in the elections and issues related to their interests and communities;
  
    - to develop and express their political views, voices, and commitments, and to learn from the views of others, including those of other people/groups and those of political parties, candidates, and officials;
  
    - to learn how to become active participants and leaders working on the issues and policies that are important to them
  
- **Inclusion and Equality in Voting and Democratic Engagement:** to help students from historically disenfranchised, politically underrepresented, and less engaged groups gain a sense of agency, opportunity to participate in a spectrum of democratic activities, and vote.

## **Strategies**

For our 2024 Action plan, our campus is refining some successful approaches and activities we have been using for several years, as well as adding some new approaches. Section VI. discusses our Strategies and Plans for Events and Activities, including strategies for voter registration, voting education, opportunities for students to learn about issues and perspectives on politics, and promoting voting.

### **I. Campus Leadership and Coalition for Civic and Voter Empowerment Work:**

Since developing our 2022 Action Plan for the ALL IN Campus democracy challenge, UC Santa Cruz has worked to develop and expand a coalition of people, organizations, and units across campus working on various facets of student civic and democratic engagement, voting, leadership, and related activities. Most importantly, Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students Garrett Naiman convened an Elections Readiness working group that began meeting

regularly in August 2024 to better communicate and coordinate the many different types of events and activities occurring across the campus. This is an exciting development for our campus, and we hope it will become a continuing endeavor. Those helping to organize and support our voting and engagement activities either through this working group or in other capacities include members of campus administration, student groups, other units and programs across campus, including student affairs, resource centers, dormitory colleges, institutes. We have also deepened our connections with our local Santa Cruz County election officials.

Network of participants working on voting and democratic engagement on campus includes the following:

- Campus Liaison/Leader, ALLIN Campus Democracy Challenge and NSLVE
  - Elizabeth Beaumont - Associate Professor Politics and Legal Studies  
(point person for Politics Department's Democratic Discourse and Engagement Initiative)
  
- UCSC Community Government Relations
  - Salina Nevarez  
(point person for voting and elections coordination work)
  
- Office of the Chancellor
  - Anna Finn, Office of the Chancellor - Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff
  
- Dean of Students Office
  - Garrett Naiman, Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students
  - Travis Becker, Assistant Dean of Students for Strategic Initiatives and Policy Analysis,  
(Campus Representative to UCOP and California State mandates on voting)
  
- Campus Communication & Marketing
  - Erin Elliott, Communications Director for Student Success and Campus Climate
  
- UCSC Elections Working Group, including Education and Engagement work
  - Alex Belisario
  - Adam Adams
  - Aims McGuinness
  - Audrey Kim
  - Elizabeth Beaumont
  - Cindy Delgado
  - Erin Elliott
  - Ebonee Williams
  - Jannet Ceja
  - Judith Estrada
  - Karina Avalos Dominguez
  - Katherine Silva Urena

Kimberly Lau  
Lain Lease  
Lenora Willis  
Mayanthi Fernando  
Mariah Lyons  
Nancy Kim  
Naomi Chu  
Rachel Neuman  
Sarah Woodside Bury  
Stephan Edgar  
Sayo Fujioka  
Shauntay Larkins  
Salina Nevarez

#### Institute for Social Transformation

- Evin Knight, point person  
(hosts voter resources page, organizing Elections and Democracy 2024 Forums)  
(Also Chris Benner, Ned LeBlond)

#### Colleges: Residence Halls and Undergraduate Educational and Co-Curricular Programming

- Sarah Woodside-Bury and Erin Ramsden, College Nine and John R. Lewis College
- Mark Gardner, Director of Academic and Co-curricular Programs (Co-Co), JRL
- Kimberly Lau, Provost, JRL College
- Aims McGuinness, Provost, Merrill College
- Mayanthi Fernando, Provost, Kresge College

#### Registrar's Office

- Tchad Sanger, UCSC Registrar, (point person for providing student voter registration information/links through student enrollment – a requirement of Student e-voter Registration Act of 2007.

#### Student Union Association/Student Government

- Andres Martinez-SabinoSUA Vice President of External Affairs 2024-2025
  - SUA Slugs Vote Coalition representative, suavpe@ucsc.edu (SUA WeVote), point person for connections to Student Union Assembly and UCSC participation in UCVote.

#### SOMECA & SOAR Student Affairs

- Sayo Fujioka, Director, **SOAR**, Student **Media**, **Cultural Arts & Diversity** (SOMeCA) (general point person)

- Katherine Canales-Molina, Associate Director, Student Organization Advising and Resources/Student Media/Cultural Arts and Diversity (SOMeCA) (point person for outreach to student groups)  
Student Groups in SOMeCA's Civic Engagement Group
- APISA (Asian Pacific Islander Student Association), Bayanihan (Filipino and Filipino American Community), Black Student Union, Education for Sustainable Living Program (ESLP), Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), Chicanx and Latine Educandose (ChALE), UMOJA (African/Black Unity), Community Unified Student Network (CUSN), Kuya-Ate Mentorship Program (KAMP), City on a Hill Press (our campus newspaper), and engaging education (e2).

## II. **Campus Commitment to Democratic Engagement**

UC Santa Cruz has an important history of student activism, empowerment, and democratic engagement, and a commitment to both educating and engaging students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Our campus principles of community emphasize commitments to openness, diversity, justice, care, discipline, purposefulness through an approach that strives for mutual respect for all members. Since 2020, the University of California, Santa Cruz has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

There are many aspects of democratic engagement woven through our campus culture. For instance, at UCSC, each of the ten residential colleges offers its own co-curricular opportunities for students to develop democratic engagement and leadership capacities. In 2024, Merrill College is taking a leading role in developing a set of public events for students to learn about and discuss issues in the elections, particularly those around media literacy and how to verify information. Our newly named John R. Lewis College also promotes students' civic and political engagement through their programming. This includes hosting speakers and holding events and workshops focused on democratic learning and involvement, from an annual "Practical Activism Conference" to events encouraging student voting, such as hosting a talk from California Secretary of State Shirley Weber to help promote California's "Student Votes Project." Student Votes is a statewide nonpartisan program "that elevates college student voices and promotes civic engagement efforts to build a more inclusive democracy."

Looking across the campus, we can see a wider range of ways that the campus expresses and activates its commitment to democratic engagement: from the many international, national, state, and local leaders and activists we bring to campus for talks and workshops, to the diverse array of student groups involved in political issues, advocacy, or civic engagement on and off campus, to our vibrant tradition of protest and civil disobedience, to the campus work to promote voting through registration efforts, tabling, organization of candidate forums, creation of voter information guides, and work to create campus polling places.

During the 2020 General Election, the 2022 midterm elections, and again in 2024, a number of campus organizations, particularly the Dean of Students Office, and Institute for Social Transformation, as well as some student groups connected with SOMeCA, are working with the

Santa Cruz County Voter Registration department to organize informational resources around registration, voting, and voter safety awareness. We are excited that in 2024 UCSC will participating for the first time in “Ballot Bowl,” the friendly competition run by the California Secretary of State’s Office in which higher education campuses are competing to try to register the most student voters <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-bowl>.

In addition to our campus commitments, the state of California and the UC System have undertaken important commitments that our campus helps to implement. These include California’s 2019 AB 963, which requests that all University of California campuses create a Student Civic Engagement and Empowerment Program to institutionalize, educate, and promote civic engagement, voter turnout, and community building. This legislation encourages creation of online civic engagement campaigns, hosting outreach events, appointing a Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator, and establishing regular meetings with student and administrative leaders.

To help support these commitments, the campus has developed a very fruitful collaboration between UCSC Community Government Relations, spearheaded by Salina Nevarez, and the Santa Cruz County Elections office, spearheaded by Helen Ruiz-Thomas. Since 2018, this partnership has included an official voting site at the Stevenson College Event center and a permanent installation of a ballot drop box on the UCSC campus at Quarry Plaza – this is one of only two permanent drop boxes in Santa Cruz county. The county has also been providing support and information for UCSC student leaders, groups, and staff on voter education voter education information and registration, including a ‘train the trainer’ model for conducting voter registrations and a communications-themed [video tailored specifically for UCSC students](#) on how to register to vote that featured UCSC students. This has been an exemplary collaboration to support student voter registration and voting. Thus, UCSC continues to build on and expand its campus commitments to student voting as part of a broader commitment to students’ democratic engagement and participation more broadly.



*2023 SOMeCA Democratic Engagement Event: Dream it, build it, organize it. (Photo SOMeCA)*

### **III. Campus Landscape at UCSC: Student Demographics and Voting Data**

University of California, Santa Cruz is a public 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2018.

We have a highly diverse student body, as reflected in the following three institutional designations: Minority Serving Institution, Hispanic-Serving Institution. Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution. Among its achievements, UC Santa Cruz is a leader in graduating first generation students and is ranked among the top five in the nation for social mobility. UC Santa Cruz is proud to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as both a Hispanic Serving Institution (one of only four in the AAU) and as an Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution.

#### **Campus characteristics and demographic data from 2023:**

University of California, Santa Cruz had a total enrollment of 19,764 for Fall 23.

This includes

- 17,812 undergraduates, 1,260 of whom are transfers
- 1,952 graduate students

89% California residents, 6% residents of other US States, 6% international

48% Women, 46% men, 6% other/unknown

#### Ethnic Composition of Undergraduates, 2023

- African American - 5%
- American Indian - 1%
- Asian - 29%
- Chicanx/Latinx - 26%
- Pacific Islander - 0.3%
- European American - 31%
- International - 6%
- Not Stated - 2%

#### Economic Status, First Generation, and Historically Underrepresented

- 33% First Generation
- 31% Pell Grant Recipients (Undergraduate only)

University of California, Santa Cruz has authorized NSLVE.

The NSLVE data for the campus includes the following

2022 campus voting rate of 35.3%;  
2022 campus registration rate of 81%  
43.6% of our registered students voted

2020 campus voting rate of 79.3%.  
2020 voter registration rate of 88.2%.

2018 overall voter turnout rate of 49.6%, 44% of enrolled UCSC undergraduate students voting.

2018 voter registration rate of 80.3%.  
62% of our registered students voted

#### **IV. Voting Trends at UCSC 2014-2022**

Since we first gained access to data on student voting at UC Santa Cruz in 2014, we have seen several general trends. First, our campus has an overall upward trend in voting rates. Second, as with the American electorate at large, UCSC student voting rates in non-presidential or mid-term elections remain far lower than in presidential election years. Third, voting rates among different student demographic groups and majors on our campus continues to be quite uneven, and this is a source of continued concern.

#### **An Overall Upward Trend in Voting at UCSC, with a high of 79% for 2020 Presidential Election**

In the nine years since 2014, UC Santa Cruz has experienced an overall trend of impressive increased student participation in national elections. The 2019 Report from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) showed that voting on the UCSC campus soared in



the 2018 midterm elections, increasing to nearly triple the campus's 13% voting rate in the 2014 midterms. According to the NSLVE, an overall voter turnout at the more than 1,000 institutions participating in the study saw an increase of 21 points, rising from an average of 19% in 2014 to an average of nearly 40% in 2018. Not only were UCSC's 2018 student voting rates even higher than NSLVE campus averages, but Santa Cruz advanced from one of the lagging campuses in 2014, with below average student voting rates, to one of the leading campuses in 2018. This surge shows UC Santa Cruz didn't just fall into the tail of a general national trend of increased student voting in 2018, but that our students helped to fuel the trend – their energy and commitment contributed to a higher wave of democratic engagement.

This upward trend continued in the 2020 general election, UCSC went on to reach an impressive voting rate of 73% among undergraduates. This was far higher than our student voting rate in the 2016 election (45%). Moreover, our student voting rate was also far higher than the average voting rate among campuses participating in NSLVE, which was 66%. Once again, UC Santa Cruz was helping to set the bar for high student voting rates for undergraduates.

We believe our dedicated work of student groups and a variety of campus efforts supported by staff, administrators, and faculty can be credited for these dramatic gains for mid-terms from 2014 to 2018, and for presidential elections from 2016 to 2020. Over the past few academic years, we have made significant strides towards mobilizing more students to vote, for example, in 2020 our campus registered 712 new students to vote despite having no opportunity to physically table or canvas. In 2020 a collaboration with UC Government & Community Relations was also able to work with the Santa Cruz County Election team to secure a ballot drop-box, making it much more convenient for students to submit mail-in ballots.

### **Lower Student Voting Rates in Midterm Elections, with a Drop in 2022**

Unfortunately, at UC Santa Cruz and more generally, voting rates remain far lower in non-presidential election years or midterm elections, even though these elections are extremely important for local, state, and national politics. We were disappointed that the UCSC voting rate in the 2022 midterm elections was 35%. This was a significant drop from our campus voting rate of nearly 50% in the 2018 election, though still far higher than our 13% rate in 2014 (and it was similar to the national average voting rate in 2020).

### **Varying Student Voting Rates among Different Racial and Ethnic Groups and Different Majors**

We have also continued to see considerable differences in voting rates among students from different racial or ethnic groups and in different fields of study. Our majors with the lowest voting rates continue to be those in STEM fields (classified in NSLVE as biological and biomedical sciences, computer science, engineering). In 2022, average student voting rates for STEM majors were 22-31%, while the majors with the highest voting rates were those in the arts, social science and humanities, where averages were 34-46%. It is clear from this data that more could be done to promote voting and engagement for all students, but especially students in STEM fields.

It is more troubling that voting rates among UCSC students differ considerably across racial and ethnic backgrounds. In 2018, 2020, and 2022, our campus NSLVE report indicated that students identified with the white racial category voted at higher rates (57%, 85%, 46% respectively) than students who identified with other racial or ethnic categories. For example, in 2022, students who identified as Non-Hispanic white had a 46% voting rate, while those who identified as non-white categories (Black or African American, Hispanic, Asian or Asian Pacific Islander, or other) had far lower voting rates, ranging from 21% to 33%. American Indian/Alaska Native students were a bright spot, with a voting rate of 42%. More work needs to be done to try to reduce these inequalities in voting rates.

Thus the numbers from the 2018 midterm, 2020 general, and 2022 general election demonstrate that although UCSC has much to be proud of, there are still important areas for improvement, especially trying to increase the uneven rates across student backgrounds and majors. We are hopeful that through increased collaboration with campus student government entities, student organizations, and administrative bodies our campus will be able to improve democratic engagement for all of our students.

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals:

- 2016 Bronze Seal
- 2018 Platinum Seal
- 2020 Gold Seal
- 2022 Highly Established Seal for Campus Action Plan

#### V. **Goals for 2024 Elections:**

Our specific, measurable, inclusive, equitable, and ambitious yet realistic campus democratic engagement goals are:

For 2024 Elections

- 1) Increase overall student voter registration rate to 89% (1 point higher than our highest rate so far, in 2020)
- 2) Increase overall student voting rate to 80% (1 point higher than our 2020 rate)
- 3) Close gaps in student voter turnout between White students and students from other racial and ethnic groups, reducing them by at least 5% by bringing non-white student voting rates up.
- 4) Close gaps in student voter turnout between students in higher-voting majors (mostly in the Social Sciences), and students in lower-voting majors (mostly in STEM fields), reducing them by at least 5% by bringing rates of low-voting majors up.
- 5) Participate in the [CA State Ballot Bowl](#); a friendly competition where higher education campuses compete to register the most students to vote and showcase civic engagement efforts. The California Secretary of State Students Vote Project hosts the

Ballot Bowl only during an even numbered year ahead of the general election. This is the first year that UCSC has participated in the Ballot Bowl.



*Students attending 2023 SOMeCA Democratic Engagement Event*

## **VI. Strategies and Plans for Events and Activities**

The University of California, Santa Cruz has a set of strategic approaches that uses a combination of campus/staff-organized and student-organized or peer-to-peer events and tactics to increase non-partisan democratic engagement and voting. These strategies provide 1) widespread opportunity and access for voter registration on-line and in person on campus; 2) a broad range of events and activities that provide voter education, information on policies, and help students gain interest and motivation in participating and voting; 3) multiple invitations, reminders, encouragements to get out the vote and turnout.

### Plans and Activities for voter registration (Fall 2024)

1. Creation, updating, and campus-wide promotion of new website [ucsc.edu/vote](https://ucsc.edu/vote) to serve as clearing house, main page for organizing information on voter registration and voting, as well as sharing info on other events and activities happening - Government & Community Relations

2. Enable voter registration during student course enrollment - Registrar's office
3. Voter registration and voting information was provided for new/transfer students through an online Student Orientation course via Canvas.
4. Voter registration at Fall Student Move-in: 3 voter registrations tables at each of 3 move-in sites with a volunteer or two for all 4 days of move-in. - A collaboration with all the dormitory Colleges, Government & Community Relations, and the Santa Cruz County Voter Registration team.
5. Voter registration at Graduate Student Orientation - Resource Fair
6. Voter registration and information at "Cornucopia," a major campus event held during Fall move-in week, which is student-led and includes over 200 student groups recruiting new members. The Santa Cruz County Voter Registration team was provided a booth for the event to offer in-person voter registration opportunities - partnership between the Dean of Students office in collaboration with the Government & Community Relations office.
7. National Voter Registration Day (Social Media campaign) on September 17th- This was extremely successful. We had two communications that went out on the campus primary Instagram account. These had a combined total of 45,679 views with around 200 students who clicked on the register to vote links.
8. The County is also providing support and information for UCSC student leaders, groups, and staff on voter education, information and registration. This includes a 'train the trainer' model for conducting voter registrations and a communications-themed [video tailored specifically for UCSC students](#) on how to register to vote that features UCSC students.
9. Tabling with voter registration and ballot information at Campus dining halls and Quarry Plaza by student groups
10. Work with Santa Cruz County Elections Office to host in-person voter registration opportunities on campus, utilizing the [Santa Cruz County Votemobile trailer](#).



### Plans and Activities for voter education, student interest, and student agency (Fall 2024)

1. Update and Publicize UCSC Elections Website [ucsc.edu/vote](https://ucsc.edu/vote) with links to voting information and resources, as well as information about campus events and activities related to the learning about the election and issues on the ballot.
2. Peer-to-Peer voter education activities by Student Groups in SOMECA's Civic Engagement Group
  - This group met throughout the summer to provide students with space to discuss national issues, political trends, and participating in the upcoming election. Students remarked how valuable this was because they rarely felt they could discuss politics at home or with their friends. Participants are organizing a variety of peer-to-peer voter education activities this Fall. Meetings included representatives from student organizations focused on media, sustainability, and communities that are historically excluded or underrepresented in the political process: APISA (Asian Pacific Islander Student Association), Bayanihan (Filipino and Filipino American Community), Black Student Union, Education for Sustainable Living Program (ESLP), Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), Chicanx and Latine Educandose (ChALE), UMOJA (African/Black Unity), Community Unified Student Network (CUSN), Kuya-Ate Mentorship Program (KAMP), City on a Hill Press (our campus newspaper), and engaging education (e2).
3. Institute for Social Transformation: Elections and Democracy Forums, 6 events open to students and the public via Zoom, with some also having in-person options. Oct. & Nov. <https://transform.ucsc.edu/events/2024-elections-forum-series/>
4. [Merrill College Plenary](#) /part of IST Elections and Democracy Forums
5. John R Lewis College Core Plenary - Finding your political power
6. [i-Lab: World Building & Politics](#) event/workshop - Mark Gardner, Academic and Co-curricular Programs
7. Expanding your Political Palate Event (How to think about your palate, how to talk to people who don't share your views, what are conversational tools, examples of how this can work. - Mark Gardner, Academic and Co-curricular Programs
8. Staff Workshop 10/0, Creating Shared, Inclusive Spaces for Engagement for Respectful Dialogue
9. Promote students leadership on voting and democratic engagement through SOMECA, including Students with Agency Toolkit
  - Readings, videos, related to democracy, civic engagement, and leadership for students organizations, including "A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future"

10. Student-led Campus News/Media - City on a Hill Press: Election Edition
11. Talk and Workshop on youth voting - SOMeCA
12. Slug Vote Swag Giveaways - "Vote" swag, designed by students. (t-shirts, stickers, etc)
13. Campus-wide email message to go out in October with voting information and resources

#### Plans and Activities for voter turnout (Fall 2024)

1. SUA UC We Vote campaign/initiative
2. Request Teaching and Learning Center and/or Faculty Senate to encourage faculty to promote student voting during class
3. Student tabling to promote voting (as well as voter registration) at Campus Dining Halls, colleges, Bay Tree Bookstore (SUA WeVote and SOMeCA)
4. Make a Note to Vote publicity campaign - (SOMeCA)
5. Planning and Coordination of polling sites on campus
  - Stevenson College Event Center (101 McLaughlin Dr, Santa Cruz)
  - Silicon Valley Campus (3175 Bowers Ave, Santa Clara)
6. Large signs on campus before and on election day for voting and to indicate voting location
7. Campus-wide email message to go out in October with voting information and resources
8. Social Media campaign on various campus accounts to promote voting site information
9. Some student groups plan to help organize "vote parties" on campus.

#### Planning for Post-Election Conversations (Fall 2024)

1. The campus is also planning several events and activities for post-election conversations and sharing. Some of these will be organized by our Campus Resource Centers and colleges.

#### **Evaluation and Reflection:**

We will evaluate and reflect on our 2024 Campus Action plan in the following ways:

- 1) The Election and Engagement working group is meeting weekly to share updates and reflections on how events and activities are going. We will continue working together after the election on post-election events and conversations. Thus, we will be able to reflect, debrief, report back, and evaluate how our various activities and efforts went this year.
- 2) We will review our NSLVE data to determine how well we were able to meet our concrete goals for increasing registration and turnout. We will seek reflections and conversations among the various groups leadership teams involved in this work, seeking to identify and build on “lessons learned” and to build a set of ideas, strategies, and collaborations for future planning.
- 3) We will review the voter registration data reported back from Santa Cruz County and the CA State Ballot Bowl to assess UCSC student voter registration turnout and engagement.
- 4) We will assess social media metrics to determine the levels of student engagement for the campus “National Voter Registration Day” campaign and compare it with the 2023 campaign results.

**Reporting:**

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/university-of-california-santa-cruz/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website.

Our 2024 campus action plan and 2024 NSLVE reports will be shared with our leadership team and we will request that this material be posted on-line for people to access, such as on the UCSC Voting and Elections page run by the Government and Community Relations office. <https://urelations.ucsc.edu/about/units/government/vote/index.html>